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The problems of being Irish

BY DENIS DONOGHUE

THE FIFTH CHAPTER of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus, late for French class at University College, comes with the Dean of Studies, Mr. Darlington. The topics include the art of lighting a fire, the currency of the word "tundish" in Lower Drumcondra. The Dean seemed to Stephen "a humble flower in the wake of clamorous overtones, a poor Englishman in Ireland". But Stephen felt "with a sort of dejection", Joyce reports, "that the man to whom he was speaking was a countryman of Ben Jonson". A few pages earlier, passing a music dealer's shop beyond the office, Stephen had repeated Jonson's line: "I was out wearier where I am". Now he ponders the question of the English Dean:

"The language in which we are speaking is before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ab, master*, but I find and mine! I cannot speak these words without unrest of spirit. This language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an impediment. I have not made or accepted its voice. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of this language."

The Dean takes up the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, but Stephen turns away in silence.

I have recalled this episode from *A Portrait* because it marks one of the fundamental circumstances of modern Irish literature: the writer is Irish, but he writes in English, a language at once "so familiar and so foreign". I believe that many Irish writers who write in English have a bad conscience in doing so, even though they have spent their entire lives among English words. Stephen Dedalus is my name, Ireland is my nation; but he does not speak Irish, and said it is. In Ireland, language is a political fact. Those who do not speak Irish speak

English with the intonation of guilt; they cannot be completely at ease with their acquired speech. Something of this restlessness has produced the irritable syntax of Stephen's mind, the torsion of "his" and "mine", England and Ireland. The Irish writer knows that even if he does not speak Irish, the language remains an old debt, never settled, and he cannot absolve himself of the responsibility.

There are moments in which he acknowledges that he should not have let his language go. Like Stephen, the Irish writer speaks and writes in English, but with resentment, fretful in its shadow. Indeed, it could be argued that Joyce, holding English words at bay, preserved his artistic soul by listening to several languages. When he left Dublin, he went to Paris, Trieste, Zurich, but not to London or New York: at least he did not consort with the enemy. He was not to be found, like Yeats, in the writing room of a London club.

But Yeats attended in his own way to the complex fate of being an Irishman. An Irishman was not merely an Englishman with a difference. In "Literature and the Living Voice" Yeats described the general characteristics of Irish culture, and spoke of restoring "a way of life in which the common man has some share in imaginative art". He continued:

Irish poetry and Irish stories were made to be spoken or sung, while English literature, alone of great literatures because the newest of them all, has all but completely shaped itself in the printing-press. In Ireland today the old world that sang and listened is, it may be for the last time in Europe, face to face with the world that reads and writes, and their antagonism is always present under some name or

other in Irish imagination and intellect.

To Yeats, reading or writing a book was a specialized activity, always pursued at some cost. "When a man takes a book into the corner, he surrenders so much life for his knowledge, so much, I mean, of that normal activity that gives him life and strength." Yeats never doubted that the imaginative life of Ireland was rural, dedicated to speech, and that the literature of print was an alien possession. When he spoke of this theme he made the kind of distinction which Walter Benjamin made, in a classic essay on Nikolai Leskov, between the novel and the story.

The novel is the work of an isolated writer in league with a printing-press: it turns toward the middle-class reader and offers him minute psychological analysis. The story comes from oral tradition and returns to that source: it is concerned with experience passed on from mouth to mouth, and intelligence that comes from afar. The context of story is natural history, its art is memory, its aim is wisdom, which Benjamin calls the epic side of truth, its procedures are formulaic and proverbial.

Translating this theme into Irish terms, one says that the place of Irish fiction is the small community, the nearly deserted village, the storyteller and his audience are peasants, the theme is life to the shadow of death. Irish fiction is a tale of peasants, landlords, and gods. Yeats thought, for a time, that "the old imaginative life" might be stirred to more life, and that this was the work of the Gaelic movement in one way, the Celtic Renaissance in another, the Abbey Theatre

was founded on speech and story.

The antagonism which Yeats mentioned in "Literature and the Living Voice" is clear in his own response to Joyce. He thought Joyce a print-man, a city-man insensitive to rural ways, a novelist rather than a storyteller or chronicler, Dublin's psychologist. In an essay on Berkeley, he associated Joyce with the "new naturalism that leaves man helpless before the contents of his own mind".

One thinks of Joyce's *Anna Livia Plurabelle*: Pound's *Cantos*, works of an heroic sincerity, the mon, his faculties in suspense, one finger beating time to a ball sounding and echoing in the depths of his own mind.

Ostensibly, it is a philosophical question, a question of aesthetics; but the particular case of Joyce is grounded, I believe, on Yeats's hostility to the urban culture of print and isolation. The hostility touched Joyce in one way, George Moore in another. Moore, "more mon than man", had published *A Mummer's Wife*, "the first realistic novel in the language", Yeats called it.

The first novel where every incident was there not because the author thought it beautiful, exciting or amusing, but because certain people who were neither beautiful, exciting, nor amusing must have acted in that way. Imagination, chief of the active faculties, was obviously in suspense.

It is customary to say that there are two traditions in Ireland. I do not repudiate the custom, provided it is clear which binary opposition we have in mind. If we are thinking of the contemporary situation, in political terms, it is proper to speak of Nationalists and Unionists. Nationalists hope to see Ireland united, the entire island; thirty-two counties; and they differ among

themselves only on the crucial question of the means toward the agreed end. Some Nationalists insist on having the country united immediately, by whatever means; others are willing to wait, such is their concern for peace. Unionists are determined, in one degree or another, that Northern Ireland will remain distinct from the rest of the country, that their loyalty to the English Crown is inviolable. Nationalists are not in every case Catholics, nor are Unionists in every case Protestants. But in any event this opposition of Nationalist and Unionist has had very little to do with Irish literature—not yet, anyway. Readers of Irish literature are aware of its bearing upon two traditions, but they do not identify these as Nationalist and Unionist.

In literature, the first tradition is Gaelic, and for the most part it is Catholic. According to this tradition, Joyce may have been a bad Catholic but he was a good Irishman; he held one of the great Irish oases, his blood was pure Irish. An Irishman in this definition would speak Irish or at least he would recall the fact that his ancestors spoke Irish. He might be a farmer or, in a small town, a shopkeeper. If he made his way to Ireland's one city, he would be the kind of person studied in Joyce's *Dubliners*. In this literary context the second tradition is Anglo-Irish, "an petty people", as Yeats described its members, in a famous Senate speech in 1925, when he identified himself with his peers:

We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke; we are the people of Grattan; we are the people of Swift, the people of Emmet, the people of Parnell. We have created the most of the modern literature of this country. We have created the best of its political intelligence.

It was a strident speech, perhaps, but it was directly in line with Yeats's claim, in 1914, to the possession

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Delius delayed

ALAN JEFFERSON:

Delius
174pp plus 8 plates, Dent, £2.25.

Since little of the British music beloved by British audiences enters an international repertoire, we understand why Delius joins the "Master Musicians" series thirty-five years later than his exact contemporary, Debussy; but why is he enrolled so much later than men who shared the insular handicap - his junior, Vaughan Williams, and his near-contemporary, Elgar? Not because the whirligig of taste may turn against an artist for some twenty-five years. It is true that Elgar recovered public favour sooner than Delius after their deaths in 1934, and that less of Delius than of Elgar can be performed with normal forces, rehearsal and expense; but some half dozen of Delius's very best works needed no recovery - some were even recorded during that critical period. Moreover Delius continued to elicit enough writing to remind us that his music did not merely gratify volup-tuaries; it fascinated connoisseurs.

The delay of this *Delius* is attributable less to differing assessments of the composer than to incomplete records of the man. Alan Jefferson

should be congratulated for finishing, and finishing well, an exacting task. His acknowledgments put a screen of modesty over labour and patience, *caput et cor*, for one cannot believe that some of Delius's relatives and acquaintances suddenly found themselves able and willing to make their statements concisely or to fill gaps left by previous writers. (Have we heard the last of the story that Delius was the son of a German prince?)

Then have his full English studies of Delius, as well as many shorter biographical contributions, been by romancers? No: Delius's travels and adventures are worthy of a peripatetic novel, but his biographers have sought truth - a word to which only the naïve fail to add Gullie Potter's "as it occurs to me now at Hogsbottom". Paradoxically there is greater need of the precaution when examining eye-witnesses than when juggling historians. It was to Mr Jefferson's advantage that he could not, like the others, use Eric Fenby's title, *Delius as I knew him*. They did not suppress information but were too near their subject to know when information ran thin and might be probed.

These three authors tell us that Delius "had a considerable following in Germany" before England wanted

his music. Mr Jefferson supplies evidence that north Germany played his work more and more after 1914, and that an avant-garde thought him likely to eclipse Strauss, with whom they were getting dissatisfied. We learn that the war deprived him of large royalties from and investments in Germany, and several hitherto unanswered questions are allayed by Mr Jefferson's details about both Fred's and Telka's finances, which were often precarious. How sketchy until now was our view of the important time when Delius was based on Paris but gradually weaned himself from that city. Even without the interesting appendix "Why Grez?" the author (far better than any of Delius's personal friends) enables us to envisage the details of the house and estate at Grez-sur-Loing, and it is no disparagement to Mr Fenby to find that a factual and medical chronicle pierces more acutely than previous writing into our imagination of the intense suffering possible when mind and senses remained alert though allied with a stricken body. This is the most useful biography of Delius that has yet been published.

The book is less useful as a guide to Delius's works, commentary upon some of which (including music examples) swells the biographical chapters, leaving more to be discussed in

a perceptive chapter entitled "Delius's Craft": but several important points can be made. One would not find five or six pages devoted to *Delius's* about the actual music of 41 *Romances and Julets* or *A Month in the Country*, his most and best works and surely readers expect an explanation of the selection. *Opus 39*, *Zuehne*, the songs, are particularly because it is not a plan of the *Opus* and the reasons for its selection. *Opus 39* would welcome some of conveying information.

There is of course some mastery of language being written, but it is necessary to consider the worst in order to understand the degree of achievement in the best. For the two of them, two languages, one a German descendant, the other a kind of Latin. And the fungus of English, of all that the untranslatable word *musica* involves; and of a world whose terrifying difference from the rest of us is hidden under a surface of beauty and tourism and the picturesque rest of it.

Some writers find it easier to portray the dark underside of Sicilian life by dealing with its obviously dark-skinned inhabitants, the simple people least touched by outside influence. Not Signor Sciascia: *Il contesto* deals with life at a fairly bourgeois level and its hero is elaborately literary, always ready with a quotation from Borges or Forster or Chesterton or Luis Cernuda, or making puns on *deserto* and *devo*. It is a thriller, mathematically contrived, about a series of murders of judges whose past seems to link them with a man who may or may not have been wrongfully convicted. Political red herrings abound and, by the end, corpses. The detective is pared down to a symbolic simplicity. "Rogus lived alone," we are told, and no more. "Nor were there women in his life (it seems, it seemed even to him vaguely, that he had once had a wife)." In spite of its lucid style the whole thing seems written in a kind of code, conceived as a puzzle: murderer and detective becoming almost indistinguishable, merging, swapping appearances and finally roles. Signor Sciascia himself calls it a parody.

The penultimate chapter, with the "Last Judgment" of Danzig, to which Memling's work was attached in 1843 and which has since been accepted as his work by every recognized student of Flemish painting. Here McFarlane's conclusion is negative, that it is a work of the school of Roger van der Weyden, showing affinities with Bouts and Memling, but possibly by a still unidentified master. "The triptych is more positive," that the triptych is a posthumous issue from Rogier's workshop, with Memling's hand very much in evidence.

In some respects the most brilliant section of the book is the last, which deals with the character and reputation of Memling's art. "Why, then, have art-historians turned against him?" asks McFarlane. Largely, I think, because he came at the end of one tradition, not at the beginning of another. These scholars who devote themselves to the study of early Netherlandish painting believe in progress. That is the great unexamined premise. "Progressive" on the lips of art-historians seems often to mean something that has little directly to do with technical advance, is much less debatable and therefore all the more emotive. A painter may be described as progressive because he seems to have gone further along the road which has been destined to follow, or which the historian perhaps thinks is ought to have followed. Movement along the highway is best, but it is better to be carried down a byway that not to move at all. This whole-hearted reliance on what to others may seem a coarse identification of "progress" with "innovation" and "modernism" dramatic innovation allows Memling's claims upon our attention to be quickly disposed of.

This excellent book demonstrates that the historical context of art history is sometimes woefully inadequate, and suggests that the divergence between historical and art-historical method might usefully be rectified.

Memling restored

K. B. McFARLANE:

Hans Memling

Edited by Edgar Wind with G. I. Harris.

74pp plus 153 plates. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £6.

In 1948 it was discovered that Sir John Donne of Kidwelly, whose portrait appears on the Donne Triptych of Memling, was not killed at the Battle of Edgecote in 1469 as had been supposed, but lived on until 1503. The importance of this was that the triptych was assumed to have been painted before 1469, a date which was accepted as an article of faith by students of Memling. The author of the discovery, K. B. McFarlane, was encouraged to publish it, but did not formulate his conclusions until 1957, when he delivered a lecture to the Stubbs Society at Oxford.

The lecture was not printed, though its substance was communicated to the National Gallery, to which the triptych had been transferred. Five years later the single lecture, became a course of eight, which McFarlane delivered at Oxford; and following these he began work on a monograph on Memling. Unfortunately he died while his task was still incomplete, and the present book has been extracted from his lectures and lecture notes by Edgar Wind (who himself died before it could appear) and G. I. Harris. The resulting volume is described by Wind in a preface as "only a shadow of the *Memling* that McFarlane would have published", but it is none the less an incisive, articulate and highly original book.

Memling, settled in Bruges in 1465, and it was widely supposed that the triptych was painted between 1466 and 1468, since it showed Donne's daughter but not his two sons (who now prove to have been born in or after 1482). There was one impediment to this dating, that the painting by Memling which most closely resembles the Donne Triptych, the "Mystic Marriage of St Catherine" at Bruges, bears the date 1479 on its frame, but this was held by students of Flemish painting to prove no more than that Memling's style did not evolve.

The contrary case is argued by McFarlane: that the only valid *terminus ante quem* for the triptych is the York collar with the personal badge of Edward IV, which would not have been worn by Sir John Donne after 1483, and that the Donne Triptych and the "Mystic

ACTION

Sicilian style

EDUARDO SCIASCIA:

Translated by E. Dale Saunders.
Cp. 100; Einaudi, L. 1, 500.

Journalism and television, factual writing without literary pretensions and even more, such things as pri- vate letters are anything to go by, the grand level of Italian prose at which Sciascia educates Italian expresses itself at the present time low, even in particular because it is not a plan of the *Opus* and the reasons for its selection. *Opus 39* would welcome some of conveying information.

There is of course some mastery of language being written, but it is necessary to consider the worst in order to understand the degree of achievement in the best. For the two of them, two languages, one a German descendant, the other a kind of Latin. And the fungus of English, of all that the untranslatable word *musica* involves; and of a world whose terrifying difference from the rest of us is hidden under a surface of beauty and tourism and the picturesque rest of it.

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GOLLANCZ

Red-hot larvae

KOB0 ABE:

The Ruined Map

Translated by E. Dale Saunders.
299pp. Cape. £1.95

Kobo Abe's novel comes to its resting on a veritable bush of language. He is author of the celebrated *The Woman in the Dunes*, has received the most important Japanese literary prize, and *The Ruined Map* was picked as one of the best six novels of 1969 by the *New York Times*. Dangling though it may be to break a lance in the face of such odds, it is difficult to see—in the case of Mr Abe's latest book, anyway—quite what the lure is about. Having said that, of course, it has to be added that readers of the English version are bound to be disadvantaged, to some extent, by the fact that they are reading the book in translation; and that it is all but impossible to tell how faithfully the translator has done his work.

Even allowing the author the benefit of that particular doubt, though, one looks in vain for those qualities which—apparently—quickened pulses and prompted superlatives at the offices of the *New York Times*. *The Ruined Map* is the story of a search for a missing person, which culminates in the loss, metaphorically, of the private detective hired to do the searching. The detective, also the narrator, is employed by an enigmatic woman, possibly not entirely innocent, to find her husband. His search seems hopeless; the clues are few and the trail misleading, but he ploughs on down through society's unwelcome and often hostile substrata, heading—though he's not aware of it—towards the rock-bottom of self-effacement; the point at which his own personality is largely absorbed by that of his quarry, so intense has been his identification with the missing man.

The uncertain roles of the principal characters, the depressing turn of minor events, the trip through Tokyo's seamy haunts and the bad habits of its petty criminals—these form the substance of the novel. It goes without saying, though, that they are little enough if they lack the benefit of a style which is at least capable, and through the book might manage to keep its balance in

the realm of ideas, it—in its transfer to tales some pretty spectacular pitfalls where style is concerned. Even the minor oddities, proliferating as they do, become irritatingly obstructive after a time; the narrator tells us that "I was struck with an optical illusion," or "I... directed my footsteps into a dark rectangle..."; or states that "There is no need to act out a snake for someone who's afraid of them"; and later he imagines someone falling "easily, without a sound, like a stone statue...". Inefficiencies like those are common enough; but they can scarcely match some of the more extravagantly preposterous metaphors:

Moreover, at the time when the possibilities were collapsing one after the other, the vevations unweaving of huge, flesh-coloured moth larvae nesting in my breast were growing in intensity... As soon as they were liberated, these gory moths would make a dash straight for that lemon-yellow window. The shadow of a man standing in their way as they passed with a rush through the glass and the curtains... waiting for the heart, they would sink the fangs into it. Hold on! Moths don't have fangs. So let them stop at the dentist's on the way...

Later, the narrator tells how "My resentment was washed away: it was as if I was under a hot shower, grasping my penis...". Surely no amount of interpretative translating could have reduced the sublime to that degree of ridiculousness.

On the run

J. M. G. LE CLEZIO

The Book of Flights

Translated by Simon Watson Taylor.
319pp. Cape. £2.60.

French title: *Le Livre des Intimes*. Mr J. M. G. Le Clezio here finds the globe in his usual cerebral style. "The book is really an anthology of his 'often talented but sometimes tedious observations, fantasies, parables and jokes'." The aim is to address the reader very directly, the result rather precious (*TLS*, June 26, 1969).

* Mr Watson Taylor's translation is both fluent and resourceful.

Ever so English

P. B. ABERCROMBIE:

The Brou-hu-lu

176pp. Macmillan. £2.25.

Cornelia Lamb has been left in London with her husband's Aunt Lucy, who, as it were, while Harvey Lamb goes off to New York having decreed a trial separation in retaliation for Cornelia's many and complicated infidelities. Her remorseful effort to fit herself for life as a diplomat's wife ends where it begins, on an educational visit to the National Portrait Gallery, for there she acquires Tigran Leontiev, a cheerful Armenian master of women and of life. This turns out to be Cornelia's most complicated affair ever: Harvey has to be called in to help release Tigran from prison, after his wrongful arrest for stealing Research Centre guinea-pigs; the Home Secretary almost has to resign; and just for a moment it looks as though Harvey really will ditch Cornelia for good.

P. B. Abercrombie's new novel consists of the correspondence between Cornelia, Harvey, Tigran, Aunt Lucy, Fossil, the villainous Deputy Sheriff, speaks:

Keep them in their place, that's what I say, and don't listen to the idiots who say that the Catholic rabble should be educated and allowed to vote. Give them full bellies and an authority that they can look up to, and they'll be better than ever they'd be if they had their blessed Ireland for the Irish.

Plus ça change... the wary reader might murmur, and though he might not be quite right about unhappy Ireland he would certainly be correct about this kind of romantic novel. For here is a professionally executed tale about a flighty but spirited English widow who seeks the haven of a

lection of poets, who must all be clean and sober, and must rhyme. This prevents one of them, Fishfoot, from acknowledging his advanced slim volume *Craypans*, so having nothing of his own to contribute to a soirée, he is asked to read aloud "Oh black-bird, what a boy you are. How you do go it!", which he does, but rather with the air of a man who eats sheep's eyes to please an Arab chief. Eventually he is detected plagiarizing little poems from *Woman's Own*, and is expelled from the poetry circle.

Awfully Irish

SARA HELY:

The Legend of the Green Man

252pp. Collins. £1.60.

It is Ireland in 1799, a year which brought avenging retribution for the uprising the year before. Sir William Fossil, the villainous Deputy Sheriff, speaks:

Keep them in their place, that's what I say, and don't listen to the idiots who say that the Catholic rabble should be educated and allowed to vote. Give them full bellies and an authority that they can look up to, and they'll be better than ever they'd be if they had their blessed Ireland for the Irish.

Plus ça change... the wary reader might murmur, and though he might not be quite right about unhappy Ireland he would certainly be correct about this kind of romantic novel. For here is a professionally executed tale about a flighty but spirited English widow who seeks the haven of a

Cornelia is like a slightly more intelligent version of Nuney Milford's Bolter, only monogamous at heart, and given to un-Milford insights about the impression her own kind makes on others: Tigran "seems to find an English accent amusing, and well he might when one comes to listen to oneself". The trouble is that all the characters in the book are very easily amused by their own little doings; the tone is thoroughly Fortnum and Mason's, and one or two good jokes have been squandered in the prevailing triviality.

Hutchinson

IN IRELAND

The Earl of Longford
& Thomas P. O'Neill
EAMON DE VALERA

James Plunkett
THE GEMS SHE WORE
A BOOK OF IRISH PLACES
May

Conor Cruise
O'Brien
STATES OF IRELAND September

Brendan Behan
BORSTAL BOY
THE SCARPER
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BRENDAN BEHAN'S NEW YORK

Edna O'Brien
THE COUNTRY GIRLS

Michael Farrell
THY TEARS MIGHT CEASE

Monk Gibbon
INGLORIOUS SOLDIER

THE BRAHMS WALTZ

THE VELVET BOW
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THE SAUCER OF LARKS

Donald S. Connery
THE IRISH May

Lee Dunne
PADDY MAGUIRE IS DEAD

A Novel/August/An Arrow Paperback Original

On the receiving end of the Reformation

G. R. ELTON:
Policy and Police
446pp. Cambridge University Press,
1961.

Among the generation of historians who established themselves in the years following the Second World War, G. R. Elton occupies a very high place. Since the late 1940s he has produced a continuous stream of books and articles, mainly concerned with different aspects of Tudor government and more particularly with England during the years 1532 to 1540. As the author of a justly renowned textbook and other general works, it is safe to say that his writings have become familiar to as many sixth-formers and undergraduates as have those of any other single historian of our time. The controversies between Professor Elton and his critics over "the Tudor Revolution" and "the man behind the Henrician reformation (king or minister?)" have become as well known as those over the fortunes and politics of the country or the causes and consequences of the early Industrial Revolution.

Now, with his *Policy and Police*, Professor Elton makes his most substantial and detailed contribution since his first book, *The Tudor Revolution in Government* (1953). The scope of the new book is conveyed by its subtitle: "The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell". But to describe and explain enforcement in turn involves the nature of the policies being enforced, and hence what the "Henrician Reformation" meant for those, so to speak, at the receiving end. Thomas Cromwell's methods and objectives, notably as a Protestant, an administrative reformer, and a strict legalist are amply demonstrated. There is much illumination, too, of the mechanics of early Tudor government, its strengths and its limitations, indeed of the limits to the effectiveness of any government in that epoch. Much too is revealed, in this work of almost impeccable scholarship and analysis, about the resources and techniques of the historian himself.

What Professor Elton has written elsewhere about the historian's craft

is here notably exemplified in practice. No space is wasted: among the author's qualities are relevance, conciseness, accuracy, relentless pursuit of exact detail, lucidity of exposition, precision as well as vigour of argument, and a certain flexible, pragmatic shrewdness. Interest is evenly sustained, and the quality of the writing very seldom falters. If the hallmark of a great historian's work is to combine the micro and the macro-cosmic visions—the absolute mastery of detail and the awareness of big problems and great issues—then this book's claims must be reckoned very strong.

Professor Elton's limitations are perhaps the obverse of his qualities. Where wider considerations of ideological principle or of social development impinge upon his theme, he sometimes appears to draw back. Thus his account of the imprisonment and trial of Sir Thomas More is a model: clear, generous, and persuasive. But original or striking evaluations of the great issues at stake seem to be almost deliberately eschewed. In many ways this is very refreshing. Some may feel too that Professor Elton has less than sufficient sympathy for idealists and visionaries, whether—in sixteenth-century terms—of the left or of the right. A more mundane regret is that the reader's way has not been signposted a little more helpfully: despite a good index, sub-headings or section divisions would seem desirable in chapters which average forty to fifty pages each (one indeed standard of accuracy goes for the printers too. Of a mere five slips or misprints noted, one could be taken for a minor factual error: according to the *DNB* and other authorities, More was executed and sent to the Tower in April 1534, not May 1535).

A complex matter, but one of some substance in relation to the general thesis of the book, involves the jurisdiction of different courts in cases of treason. We are told that the Council of the North had a certain John Ainsworth tried and executed for treason, whereas the record seems to show that, although it was the Council which initiated his examination and subsequent indictment, his trial was held before

the assize judges at York. Later we are told that "by no means all the King's courts could try treason, and in particular none but common-law courts could." Yet the Council of the North had twenty-three people executed after the Pilgrimage of Grace in the years 1537-1540, and "of all subordinate authorities only that Council ever acted in treason cases without reference to Cromwell or the Privy Council." This is a difficult and debatable question. And where the author has done so much to clarify both the law of treason in the sixteenth century and its practical implementation, it may seem ingracious to carp at a single ambiguity.

The burden of Professor Elton's argument is that there was indeed an enforcement problem for Henry and Cromwell. England was neither solidly behind the King and his policies, nor crowded into silent submission. Yet at the same time enforcement was not achieved by a remorseless, all-embracing reign of terror. Success was due rather to patience, efficiency, and even—to the standards of the time—justice tempered with clemency and good sense. Cromwell himself emerges from these pages, more surely than from Professor Elton's other writings, as a man of unmistakable Protestant religious convictions, forward-looking in almost every aspect of his public policies, and far more than a tireless administrator and police chief—though that he certainly was—but at the same time fully ensnared as the servant of Henry VIII, that formidable, largely backward-looking and most unpredictable monarch.

Special studies are devoted to the threats posed to the Crown and its policies by "Rumour, Magic and Prophecy", and to the government's own use of propaganda (chiefly by means of the printed word) to further its objectives. But the extent and nature of opposition and the means used to overcome it are kept at the centre of the picture, being viewed from various aspects in dif-

ferent chapters. Finally, a judicious and exhaustive count is undertaken of all those accused of treason and related offences, the believed outcome being given according to each type of charge or accusation. Thus, of the 94 accused of "treason by words" under the notorious Henrician statute, at most sixty-three suffered the death penalty; whereas a probable thirty-nine were executed out of ninety-eight accused of conspiracy.

By classifying those involved in the fall of the Boleyns and that of the Pole, as well as the victims of the unsuccessful northern risings separately (no matter what the form of the accusations against them), Professor Elton is able to show the relatively small scale of extreme measures. For, excluding these categories, at most 127 persons were executed. And even if we include all the political and ideological victims of these eight years (making a probable sum total of 329), it is fair to be reminded that this was fewer than the total number upon whom Elizabeth I was reigned after the northern rising of 1569; and by contemporary Continental standards it was positively restrained. But from a single general problem of crisis in government, society, or ideas which occurred both in England and England, between the reformation and the middle of the sixteenth century, we are led to a small scale a bloody and repressive one. It was emphatically not a tyranny, where the mere will of the ruler and his henchmen had the force of law. The acquittals detailed here, and the much more numerous cases which were simply dropped, are sufficient proof of that.

Professor Elton generously says that further research in local sources by other scholars may well cause some of his findings to be modified. If anything, this would seem unduly modest. For apart from a few medieval archives and the records of ecclesiastical courts in certain dioceses, it is hard to think of any such sources for these years. And a

seems unlikely that more detailed aspects of his general position will need amendment. It would also agree, plenty of questions remain to be asked of the England of Thomas Cromwell, more than any other book, *Policy and Police* has worked, and what it was really to live under the rule of Henry VIII and his great bureaucratic minister serves the title of "Tudor Reformation".

In crisis

H. R. TREVOR-ROPER:
Religion, the Reformation and Social Change
486pp. Macmillan, £5.50.

Professor Trevor-Roper's book will continue to be disappointing to those who have not written a full-length history. However, as the author points out, these essays... are all concerned with a single general problem of crisis in government, society, or ideas which occurred both in England and England, between the reformation and the middle of the sixteenth century. And, at his best, he is generally felt when a gesture is made to be agreeable falls flat. But if the new Governor were an Irish Catholic he would be regarded by many Catholics as a traitor—an Irishman representing an English monarch in Ireland—and would be high on the assassination lists. As for the Ulster Protestants, the appointment of a Catholic—of whatever provenance—as Executive Governor would appear to many of them as the worst insult and threat to the province since the reign of James II, and since the abolition of the Ulster peerage.

So far as the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury are concerned, the undoubted pleasure of Belfast Catholics at seeing their Holy Father would be marred by the spectacle of thousands of their fellow citizens trying to get at that venerated figure in order to throw him in the Lagan (together with the Archbishop) by coming with the Pope, and there by becoming, in Protestant eyes, what an Irish Catholic Governor would be in Irish Catholic eyes—a traitor. The whole ecclesiastical exercise, if carried out, would produce riots and mayhem on a scale far exceeding anything that even Belfast has yet known. Fortunately, the Pope, whether infallible or not, has sense enough to keep out of Belfast.

Components and variants of the Catholic/Governor/Pope/Archbishop have been heard from more than one member of Parliament, and from a newspaper magnate. Their disaster-trauma suggestions were the result of stupidity or ill-will, but of superficial information. It is probable that if they had read the first of the three books reviewed here they would not have offered these suggestions, and indeed that they would have refrained altogether from utterance on this grim, complex and impracticable subject.

The material in this long book—more than 550 pages including the notes—is rich in detail. No attempt will be made here to summarize a book which everyone seriously interested in Northern Ireland will want to read for themselves, but attention should be drawn to certain aspects of Professor Rose's findings which seem particularly significant.

The first concerns the degree of alienation of the Catholic minority from the Northern Ireland regime. In the forty-ninth year of that regime's existence, this survey shows that that alienation—while greater than certain Unionist spokesmen, in their more euphorically "Rhodesian" moments, suggested—was less, indeed considerably less, than nationalist spokesmen were accustomed to claim. Professor Rose's single most startling finding is that 33 per cent of the Catholic part of his sample said they approved the constitutional position of Northern Ireland; 34 per cent said they didn't approve; 32 per cent said they didn't know. (We aren't told what happened to the other 1 per cent.) Among Protestants the proportions were: approve 68 per cent; disapprove 1 per cent; don't know 22 per cent (apparently Protestants are more amenable to being added up than Catholics are).

Even in 1968, 34 per cent was almost certainly inadequate as an index of Catholic alienation. Many of the 33 per cent "don't know" could probably be added to it. Professor Rose limited education, and the two communities, with a slight tiltation of the Catholic component. The inflation is not significant for

Ulster's differences

DAVID ROSE in England who have given earned, but not very prolonged, thought to the Northern Ireland question sometimes come up with the idea that the solution would be the appointment of a Catholic Tory Lord as Executive Governor. The Catholics would love him for his religion, the Protestants for his politics. The process would be helped on by a combined visit of the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, to recommend religious peace.

Direct contact with the area, and conversation with members of the two communities, brings the depressing discovery that a Catholic Tory would be the most unpopular of all possible governors. The Catholics, if true, would not necessarily dislike him much more for being Catholic as well as Governor. If he were an English Catholic, the weight of additional dislike would hardly be perceptible, since the Catholicism of the English is not felt to be the same as the religion of the same name practised in Ireland. There would be the embarrassment which is generally felt when a gesture is made to be agreeable falls flat. But if the new Governor were an Irish Catholic he would be regarded by many Catholics as a traitor—an Irishman representing an English monarch in Ireland—and would be high on the assassination lists. As for the Ulster Protestants, the appointment of a Catholic—of whatever provenance—as Executive Governor would appear to many of them as the worst insult and threat to the province since the reign of James II, and since the abolition of the Ulster peerage.

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The stratigraphy of loyalties

Richard Rose's *Governing Without Consensus* is probably the most illuminating book ever written about Northern Ireland. Its core is made up of the responses to what Professor Rose called a "loyalty" survey carried out by him over "a multi-stage stratified random sample of 1,500 households". The stratification of areas was "by religion, parishes, and urban, semi-urban or rural character". A total of 757 Protestants and 534 Roman Catholics were interviewed: 58.6 per cent Protestant and 41.4 per cent Catholic—approximating the actual balance of the two communities, with a slight tiltation of the Catholic component. The inflation is not significant for

RICHARD ROSE:
Governing Without Consensus
567pp. Faber and Faber, 6s.

R. S. P. ELIAOT and ROBIN HUCKLE:
Ulster
A Case Study in Conflict Theory
180pp. Longman, £2.80.

CONSTANTINE URGHIREN:
Red Hand: The Ulster Colony
367pp. Michael Joseph, £3.

The survey, since results are presented separately for Protestants and Catholic respondents, was carried out during the period March to August, 1968. The results therefore relate to the last months of what may now call "The old Northern Ireland". The period of the survey was not only before the coming of serious violence, but also before the Civil Rights Movement entered its active phase of non-violent militancy. In October, 1968, it must not, therefore, be assumed that the attitudes recorded by Professor Rose are those now held by the same proportion of the two communities. In many cases they almost certainly are not: a hardening of attitudes, in both communities, throughout the period between 1968 and 1972 is something which almost all observers agree in discerning. The true extent, character and distribution of what is vaguely described as "hardening" could, however, only be found out by means of a new survey, conducted as closely as possible on the lines of Professor Rose's 1968 survey.

Fortunately Professor Rose was very happy in his choice of dates: a survey finished in the summer of 1968 forms the perfect baseline against which to measure the effects of the years of challenge and of violence. Unfortunately, it would probably not be safe to attempt such a survey either in present conditions, or in any conditions likely soon to exist in the province; and if a new survey were attempted its results might not be reliable. A climate of fear, suspicion, intimidation and violence is unfavourable to the carrying-through of any kind of public opinion survey, but especially of one in which "hot" a subject is involved.

The material in this long book—more than 550 pages including the notes—is rich in detail. No attempt will be made here to summarize a book which everyone seriously interested in Northern Ireland will want to read for themselves, but attention should be drawn to certain aspects of Professor Rose's findings which seem particularly significant.

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tion. But even if we make the extreme assumption that all the "don't knows" can be lumped with the "disapproves", we are still left with the fact, as it was then, of approval of the Northern Ireland Constitution by one third of the Catholics. In present circumstances it may safely be assumed that that figure would be greatly reduced.

It might be thought that the 33 per cent who approved were the upper crust of the Catholic community. Other parts of the survey, however, show little reason to believe that there is much class difference between them and the 34 per cent "disapproves", although most of the "don't know" presumably fall in a lower class than either of the deciding groups. Professor Rose finds a strong correlation between political views and religion; and a weak correlation between political views and social class. These facts are of course obvious to anyone who has spent any time in Northern Ireland, but like many other obvious facts they have been partly concealed from view by a froth of rhetoric. Professor Rose blows away much of the froth.

In so far as class differences are more important than religious differences, then Ulster people of the same class should have more similar regime outlooks than people of different classes but the same religion. The data from the loyalty surveys clearly reject this hypothesis. The difference between middle-class and working-class Protestants in support for the constitution is 4 per cent and 3 per cent in endorsement of an Ultra position. Similarly, among Catholics, there is only a 2 per cent difference across classes in support for the constitution, and a 5 per cent difference in endorsement of a demonstration against the regime. The differences between religions are much larger. Within the middle class, Protestants and Catholics differ by 36 percentage points in their readiness to support the constitution. And manual workers differ by 30 percentage points. In other words, in conformity with basic political laws, about half of each class group is ready to endorse extra-constitutional actions against others who share class but not regime outlooks. It is particularly noteworthy that there is no consistent tendency for middle-class Ulster people to be readiest to endorse the constitution and refrain from extra-constitutional politics, notwithstanding their relative advantage in terms of status.

Frail straws of hope

Governing Without Consensus is a rather depressing book—as any objective book on Northern Ireland has to be. One can pick from it, for consolation, two straws of potential hope. One is the fact that, whereas the Catholic hierarchy have rejected integrated education—Catholics and Protestants together—no less than 69 per cent of the Catholic part of Professor Rose's sample are in favour of integrated education. (This is, even so, a frail little straw for the author also finds that "while attendance at mixed schools tends to reduce Ultra and rebel views, it does so only to a very limited extent". The figures he cites, however, are a little more encouraging than his "very limited" would suggest.)

The second relatively hopeful finding—and a much-needed ray of hope in the present time—is that people who recalled "actively bad" community relations showed the least propensity to endorse violence. This suggests, says Professor Rose, "that while sectarian bitterness will make people fighting mad, some who see its consequences in bloodshed and disorder will react against it." Let us hope the "some" will become "many".

The factual content of *Governing Without Consensus* is presented with admirable lucidity and fairness. Professor Rose's theoretical formulations based on the material seem to be less

THAMES AND HUDSON

April books

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Eric Bentley, the distinguished American dramatic critic and polemical writer, has compiled excerpts from the transcripts of the Un-American Activities Committee of the United States Congress from 1938 to 1968, focusing on its confrontations with writers, artists and performers. Commentary on the excerpts is included along with an appendix of related material from contemporary periodicals. 15.00 April 4

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Text by T. S. R. BOASE

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The emergence of Sambo

ANN J. LANE (editor):

The Debate over Slavery

Stanley Elkins and His Critics

378pp. University of Illinois Press
(American University Publishers Group), £4.25.

Many of the best-known theories devised by American historians to explain their unique civilization have been little more than broad metaphoric assertions or analogies. They are incapable of proof or disproof; still, in spite of their specific inapplicability they persist, because they appear to explain something profound or general. Sometimes the bold statement of a theme begins a whole school of historical writing. Such a work was Stanley Elkins's *Slavery*, first published in the United States in 1959. Since that time his book has been subjected to an amazingly critical examination by those who were intrigued or outraged by his comparison of the Southern slave system to the German concentration-camps, and his description of the behaviour of the victims of both systems.

Ann J. Lane has gathered in *The Debate over Slavery* much of the best work written in answer to the original Elkins theory. It is an excellent sampling, all the more interesting because it reflects the impact of current black consciousness in America, and because it poses time and again the intriguing dilemma of the relationship between slavery and racism. Each of the essays focuses upon one of Professor Elkins's specific points, his methodology, his facts, or his logic, and goes on to discuss a counter-theory or portray a specific part of slave life in North America. If nothing else, Professor Elkins was right to

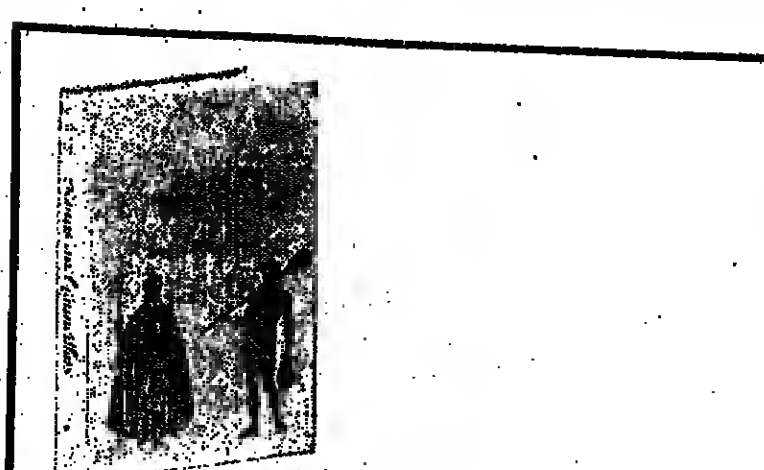
claim that he could break the fruitless and protracted dispute which had run from the end of the Civil War to the 1950s over whether slavery actually benefited American Negroes or not. By investigating slave psychology, and by comparing North American to Latin American slavery, he shifted the discussion from platonic assertions about paternalism and heroism to an attempt to reconstruct the personality of the slave.

The answers he put forward have inspired important work by historians such as Eugene Genovese and David Brian Davis, who have also done comparative work on slavery but with very different results. It now seems possible to write with some authority about the existence of family life on plantations, about underground slave culture, and about the relationship between home and field slaves. Thus each of the authors in Dr Lane's anthology builds upon Professor Elkins's original work, even while his own work is an effort to disprove the thesis of *Slavery*.

Still, after reading *The Debate over Slavery* and conceding each author his objections to the Elkins thesis, one is struck by the tenacity of this thesis about the general character of North American slavery. It is obvious that some critics miss Professor Elkins's emphasis, which is not on slavery so much as on the emergence of a peculiar type of slave, the "Sambo", whose child-like personality has long been a theoretical and literary favourite. To explain the existence of this personality, Professor Elkins made two comparisons—first between Latin American and North American slavery, finding them unlike; and then between the psychological environ-

ment of concentration-camps in Nazi Germany and the American plantation system: these he found to be remarkably similar, so much so that the imprisoned and enslaved exhibited the same infantile and utterly dependent behaviour.

There are other reasons why Professor Elkins's original book remained important beyond the measure of its historical accuracy. Unfortunately, none of the essays in the anthology puts slavery in perspective, for it was the mixture of familiar explanations and new circumstances that made for the vigour of his arguments. Having inspired Professor Elkins' credit for his inspiration, one can see his thesis in its relationship to other traditional explanations of the "American character". In the argument that a closed society could create infantile behaviour, he was asserting the converse of the notion that an open society made for individualism and independence, an idea which Albert Tzvetchev was commonplace, in "Sambo". Professor Elkins accepted as real, in much the same way as plantation defenders did, the existence of black men and women completely and solely defined by their bondage, without their own culture or means of psychological survival. In the comparison of slavery to concentration-camps rather than penal institutions or simply other slave societies, he raised once more the question of moral equivalence in such a way that no slave expert could avoid answering it. He created a thesis which will undoubtedly be a long and controversial life in spite of the convincing and more substantial work written in reply, precisely because it is so much in the mainstream of American historical



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Commentary

The British Library Bill, which is to be introduced in the House of Lords, appears with commendable urgency fourteen months after the publication of the White Paper and after eight meetings of the Organizing Committee set up at the end of May last year. It gives effect to the White Paper's main proposals by providing for the establishment of a National Library under the management of a public authority to be known as the British Library Board, making provision for the constitution, proceedings and incidental powers of the Board, transferring to it, "subject to such exceptions as may be agreed between the Board and the Trustees of the British Museum", the contents of the British Museum Library and, consequently, amending the Copyright Act so as to require the delivery of a copy of every book published in the United Kingdom to the Board instead of to the Museum. The incorporation into the British Library of the National Central Library of Science and Technology, and the British National Bibliography does not require legislation and so receives no mention in the Bill.

The effect of the legislation now proposed would thus be to take the British Library out of the Civil Service and to place it under a Board charged with the duty of managing it as "a national centre for reference, study and bibliographical and information services, in relation both to scientific and technological matters and to the humanities". The Board, it is proposed, shall be empowered to carry out and sponsor research, to contribute to the expenses of other libraries, and, subject to such restrictions and conditions as they think necessary, lend any item and make any part of their collections or premises available in connection with educational, literary, or cultural events. It is to consist of fifteen members: at least one of its members is to be of whole-time, and of its part-time members one is to be nominated by the Museum's Trustees; and the members are to be persons with experience of library or university affairs, finance, business or administration. Provision is also made for the constitution of Advisory Councils to advise the Board or any department of the British Library on such matters as the Secretary of State may determine. The White Paper's unhappy proposal for constituent Directorates has been dropped.

All this seems thoroughly sensible. The proposal that the British Library should lead items is doubtless inevitable since one of its constituents is a leading library already, but it needs amplification (not will doubtless receive it in the debate). It is greatly to be hoped also that the research which the Board is envisaged, as sponsoring will not be confined to the field of management and information studies in their narrower sense, but that the Board will actively promote, in collaboration with other libraries of national and special status, all those scholarly activities to which the staff of the British

Museum Library have so notably contributed in the past. We must hope, too, that the learned societies of the country will be fully represented on the Advisory Councils and that the Councils themselves will become not merely the watchdogs of the user but also a positive and initiatory force in defining and fostering the specialist activities which the interests of national scholarship in all fields will demand. In this regard the British Library will inherit a heavy responsibility and a noble tradition which the devotees of the British Museum will expect it to continue and cherish.

Introducing the 1969 Finance Act with its revolutionary section granting exemption from income tax to writers, composers, sculptors and painters, the then Irish Minister of Finance explained that the purpose of the relief was "to help create a sympathetic environment here in which the arts could flourish by encouraging artists and writers to live and work in this country". Though a sympathetic environment for the arts can be destroyed in three days (even less at a pinch), creating one takes far more than a bare three years, so it would be unfair and unrealistic to expect tangible results of any considerable scope as yet. But a look, not so much at its behind the statistics to date, shows the trend of the Act's influence on writers and the literary scene.

Of the 281 exemptions granted so far, writers and playwrights account for 70 per cent. No breakdown of this figure as between nationals and non-nationals is available (the requirement of the Act being merely the standard residential qualification) but the evidence suggests that non-nationals would not exceed a couple of dozen. If this few dozen were mostly writers of eminence (as distinct from mere fame), then one could hope for the gradual build-up of profitable exchange. But tax-exemption as a bait for foreign writers will attract only the big-time earners, i.e. consistent best-sellers, for whom a tax-haven is "sympathetic environment" enough. And so far as expatriate Irish writers are concerned, the Act has had only negligible success in luring them home. So, with very few exceptions, the intake has not been composed of what one might call inspirational writers. Whether, and in what way, the writers who have settled in Ireland can have a tangible beneficial effect on the Irish literary scene is not clear—perhaps by just being there, giving interviews, making friends, rubbing Irish writers and would-be writers. But up to now no one has made any imaginative suggestion, or comprehensive effort directed towards their structural assimilation, which is the prerequisite for the broadening of native vistas the Act appeared to envisage. It may be too early for that, however. Yet unless somebody does so, then the much-bruited relief may put more money in some writers' pockets but it will not put any more words on a page than would have been there anyway.

What has for quite some time been putting more words on Irish pages than might otherwise have been there is the Arts Council. Although its annual grant is only some £80,000 (against £250,000 for its opposite number in Northern Ireland) and despite what many consider to be a marked orientation towards the visual arts which has resulted in literature, as distinct from drama, getting only a meagre 5 per cent of its monies to date, it has had an unobtrusive but very real effect on Irish writing over the past two decades. It does not give money grants to writers but in every other way it encourages them and financially aids them or publishers to bring out their work. But for its interventions the "little magazine" would have been virtually extinct in Ireland long ago and though the view has been held that its activities in this field have been too indulgent and indiscriminate, the Council has sensibly not found it necessary to amend its attitude. In a small country with a rather circumscribed publishing industry, the absence of "little magazines" would almost certainly result in a dearth of writers.

One other fairly recent change in the Irish literary scene bears commenting on—the relaxation of the censorship laws. Briefly, since 1967 the position has been that a book is automatically banned after twelve years on the banned list. Of course it can be re-banned (*The Ginger Man* was, though not before a time-lag during which many thousands of copies were sold!) but by and large the axe now falls only on the most blatant pornography, and the luridly-covered paperback platons are an open, unmissed display. The censure which shrouded literary Ireland in the bad old years of censorship has been largely dispelled and one has to search hard in one's memory to recall the last time a new book by an Irish author was banned. This may afford no more than a sense of wry satisfaction to any who have been subjected to the insult, but who can measure the effect on a young Irish writer of the knowledge that he can now write what he wants with very little risk of being officially condemned as a polluter of his native literary atmosphere?

At the Victoria and Albert Museum there is an exhibition, which will be on until April 23, to celebrate the first awards made under the bequest of the late Francis Williams "for the encouragement of book illustration". One cannot help thinking that Mr Williams's object (to which he devoted enough money to provide £500 in prize money every five years) was to encourage the neglected art of illustrating books—neglected because books are too often illustrated with photographs, because artists can find other and more lucrative things to do, because books now play second fiddle to television, and so on, and so on. The selection committee for

from March 20 until the end of the exhibition there (the British Museum shows it in the Lecture Theatre of the Museum, a slide-film with sound track illustrating and describing the work of the artists) and a selection of the objects over five miles of rough terrain to the Nile. The film, which lasts for ten minutes, will be shown at 10.30 and 11.30 am and on Sunday from 2.30 pm to 5 pm. The charge for admission will be 10p for adults and 5p for children, students and pensioners. The proceeds will be given to the Lincolnton Fund for the temples of Philae. Tickets can be booked in advance.

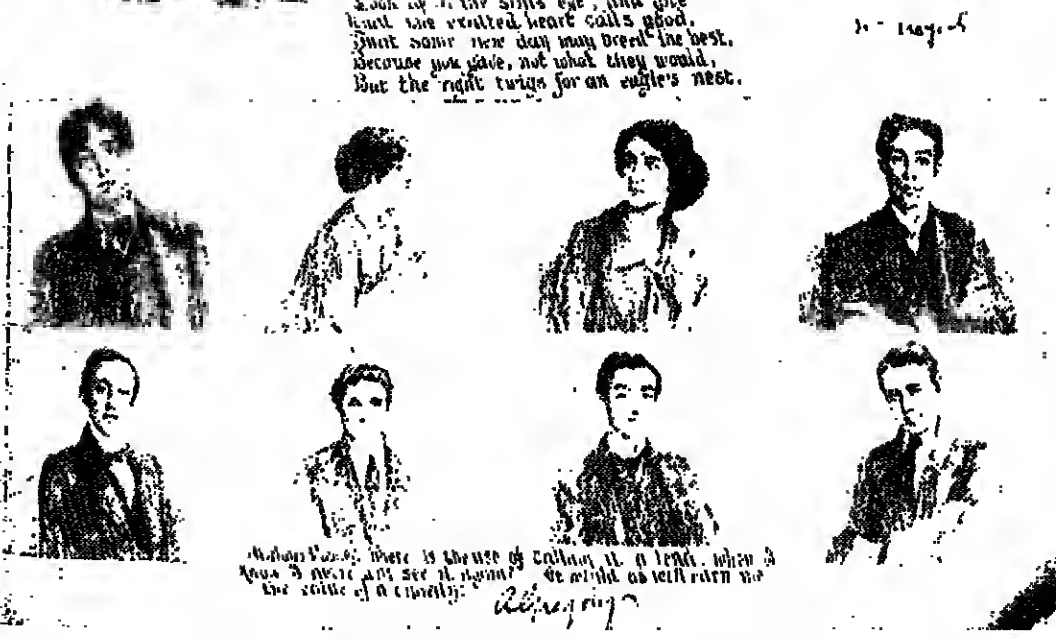
Images of an Empire

Featured in *The Times Saturday Review* (4 March) and by booksellers everywhere, *The Habsburg Empire* is the star of our spring list. In over 300 photographs it gives a dramatic and perceptive visual history of the huge Empire from 1840 to 1918. It evokes a hauntingly real impression of the world of Imperial Vienna, Prague and Budapest, and the many other towns, villages and peoples which made up the old Austrian Empire. *The Habsburg Empire: The World of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Original Photographs 1840-1918*, by Franz Huhmann, edited by Andrew Whealcroft, will delight scholar, photographer and general reader alike. £5.50

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL

London and Boston

Sold by the Irish Players at 100 towards a building to save Sir Hugh Lane's Great Gift of Paintings for Ireland April 1973



Second visit of the Abbey Company to America trying to raise money to house the Hugh Lane art collection. The second visit was printed on Irish linen with a scene from the play and the drawings as by Jack Yeats. It was to help raise funds. The concert was given to the Abbey and the Hugh Lane collection by Leonard Robinson after being rescued from the fire at the Abbey—hence the search marks.

PLAYS PEASANT AND UNPEASANT

BY BRIAN FRIEL

It is high time we dropped from the calendar of Irish dramatic events all those playwrights from Shaw to Shaw and that includes Shaw, Goldsmith and Shaw—who no more belong to Irish literature than John Field belongs to music or Francis Bacon to Irish painting. Fine dramatists they were, assured of at least a generous share in the history of English literature. But if we take as our delimiting Irish drama plays written in English on Irish subjects and named by Irishmen, we must leave all those men who wrote within the English tradition, for the English tradition, for the English people, and go back no further than 1899, the night of May 8, the opening of the Irish Literary Theatre.

Irish drama is a horse of a different colour and is a different thing. It is a thing of twenty-three years old. It was founded by Yeats, an elitist, who set up an unpopular theatre and an audience like a secret society where admission was by favour never to many, and who covered with dismay that instead of the first to create a "People's Theatre". Yet we did set out to create this sort of theatre and to success has been to encourage and a defeat. The first two playwrights, Shaw and O'Casey, who are considered the founders of Irish drama, have been packed into

its brief life more riots than the English theatre has seen in 800 years. The Abbey has had almost a monopoly of the riots, ever since the night in 1899 when the Irish Literary Theatre put on *The Countess Cathleen*, right up to last year when a revival of *O'Shea's* was physically interrupted by a section of the audience. The riots were shouted down by the objectors who claimed that it was "irrevocable" the struggle in Northern Ireland, and television cameras were conveniently at hand at the request of the objectors. Another interesting aspect of that event is that one of the demonstrators, Lalla Doolin, has since become artistic director of the Abbey, a happy, un-Irish, riot-to-riar tale.

But it must be admitted that the theatre riots are not what they were in Yeats's or O'Casey's early days when actors had to have police protection. Indeed a scholarly study of "Riots in the Irish Theatre", or better still "The Decline of The Irish Literary Theatre", would reveal an interesting shift in the attitude of the Irish people to the art of drama, and perhaps a matching decline in the art itself. It would show that in the first quarter of the century we brought to the theatre a high seriousness as worthy in its own way as the seriousness of the playwrights, that we recognized then that the

theatre was an important social element that not only reflected but shaped the society it served; that dramatists were revolutionary in the broadest sense of that word; and that subjective truth—the artist's truth—was dangerously independent of Church and State. Admittedly there are subtler methods of expressing strong disagreement than spitting on your author and hurling chairs at your players (we learnt the more sophisticated art of Church and State censorship later). But the indication of a rude involvement, and was certainly the most convenient and most natural weapon for a peasant society. Because, beneath the patina of Hibernoese hotels and intercontinental jet airports and unsharps suits and private swimming-pools, that is what we still are—a peasant people.

Peasant is an emotive word. It evokes sympathy, taint, dreamer, pur, individual, pastoral or disgust (ignorant, vulgar, philistine, thick). But to understand anything about the history or present health of Irish drama, one must first acknowledge the peasant mind, then recognize its two dominant elements: one is a passion for the land; the other a paranoid individualism. And these two elements have not only been the themes of dozens of Irish plays but have informed in a much wider sense the entire corpus of Irish

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FABER & FABER

The Fight

When I found the swallow's
Nest under the bridge—
Ankle deep in the bog stream,
Traffic drumming overhead—
I was so pleased, I ran
To fetch a school companion
To share the ionic fragility
Of the shells, lightly freckled
With colour, in their cradle
Of feathers, twigs, earth.

It was still breast warm
Where I curved in my hand
To count them, one by one
In his cold palm, a kind
Of trophy or offering. Turn-
ing my back, to scoop out
The list, I heard him run
Down the echoing hollow
Of the bridge. Splashing
After, I bent tangled in
Bull wire at the bridge's
Mouth, when I saw him take
Against a sunlit stone.

For minutes we fought
Standing and falling in
The river's brown spate.
And I would still fight,
Though now I can forgive;
To worship or destroy beauty—
That double edge of impulse
I recognise, by which we live:
But also the bitter paradox
Of betraying love to harm,
Then lunging, too late,
With fists, to its defence.

JOHN MONTAGU

Fodder

Or, as we said,
fodder, I open
my arms for it
again. But first

to draw from the tight
vice of a stack
the weathered eaves
of the stack itself,

falling at your feet,
last summer's tumbled
swathes of grass
and meadowweet

multiple as loaves
and fishes, a bundle
tossed over half-doors
or into mucky gaps.

These long nights
I would pull hay
for comfort, anything
to bed the stall.

SEAMUS HEANBY

SIX IRISH POETS

38 Phoenix Street

Look.
I was lifted up
past rotten bricks weeds
to look over the wall.
A maunty lifted up a baby on the other side.
Dusty smells. Cat. Flower bells
hanging down purple red.

Look.
The other. Looking.
My finger picked at a bit of dirt
on top of the wall and a quick
wiry redgolden thing
ran back down a little hole.

We knuck up on our chairs in the lamplight
and leaned on the brown plush, watching the gramophone.
The turning record shone and hissed
under the needle, lifting, lifting.
John McCormack chattered in his box.

Two little tongues of flame burned
in the lamp chimney, wavering
their tips. On the glassy belly
little drawnout images quivered.
Jimmy's mammy was drying the delph in the shadows.

Mister Cummins always hunched down
sad and still beside the stove,
with his face turned away toward the bars.
His mouth so calm, and always set so sadly.
A black robbery scar stuck on his white forehead.
Sesled in his sad cave. Hiss horror erecting
slowly out of its rock nests, nosing the air.
He was buried for three days under a hill of dead,
the faces congested down all round him
grinning *Dardanelles* in the dark.
They noticed him by a thread of blood
glistening among the black crusts on his forehead.
His heart gathered all its weakness, to beat.

A worm hanging down, its little round
black mouth open. Sad father.

I spent the night there once
in a strange room, tucked in against the wallpaper
on the other side of our own bedroom wall.

Up in a corner of the darkness the Sacred Heart
leaned down in his long clothes over a red oil lamp
with his women's black hair and his eyes lit up in red,
hurt and blaming. He held out the Heart
with his women's fingers, like a toy.

The wick, with a tiny head
of red fire, wriggled in its pool.
The shadows flickered: the Heart beat.

THOMAS KINSELLA

Ravenswood

The light shrank
back and Ravenswood
locked them in.

Armed to fight
men, their hearts stalled
where ravens dangled

dead. Doomed men
don't prize what's already
lost: they left the wood's

shelter, were found
and died, red iron
skirling in their throats.

* * *

Field, booty won,
the victors wiped their knives
and praised the plot

but who would
enter Ravenswood
to cut the ravens down?

RICHARD MURPHY

Kate Whiskey

I kept the whiskey in the caves
Well up in the hills. It was never safe
To have it about the houses,
Always crawling with excise and police.

The people could still get the stuff
As often as they liked, and easily enough,
For those were still the days
When making whiskey broke nobody's laws.

Selling it, though, was no grave
An offence as teaching these people to love,
Fathers and husbands and boys.

Water rushed through my caves with a noise
To tell me how I should always live.
I sold the water, the whiskey I would give.

PAUL MULDOON

Song for a Corncrake

Why weave rhetoric on your voice's loom
Shuttling at the bottom of my garden
In meadowweet and broom?
Crepuscular, archaic politician,
It's time to duck down,
Little bridegroom.

Why draft an epic on a myth of doom,
In staunchly nailed iambs
Launched nightly near my room?
Since all you need to say is *cres*,
Give us lyrics,
Little bridegroom.

Why go on chiselling mottoes for a tomb,
Counting on a scythe to spare
Your small defenceless home?
Quicken your tune, O improvise, before
The combine and the digger come,
Little bridegroom.

RICHARD MURPHY

The heirs of Saint Columba

PUBLISHING IN IRELAND

BY LIAM MILLER



Title page of the first Book of Common Prayer printed in Dublin.

man's "first exile", Sami
Columba, who founded the
monastic settlement at Iona on the
west coast of Scotland in 563 AD,
the forerunner of much that has
typical of our country's contri-
bution to the culture of the West. He
was a scholar, a poet and, in his own
time, a publisher (or copyist) of
books for which his failing he was
into exile because he had made
an unauthorized copy of a manu-
script. This book of psalms, the
back of disputed ownership,
was in the early form of the fine
half-bound letter, is now among
most treasured possessions of the
Irish Academy in Dublin.
Columba's departure to Iona heralded
the great Irish export drive into
the three succeeding centuries,
and to the Continent much of the
cultural and artistic illumination
that had been extinguished at the
fall of Rome's empire.

The small island never suffered
from the legions of Rome, and,
the collapse of the empire, be-
came the principal storehouse of
Irish culture. In the monastic
scriptoria, the Irish scribes copied not
only the scriptures and commentaries
of the great authors, but also
Irish sources: a legible script
of beauty, the Irish uncial, and
the letter-form that became the
basis for the manuscripts produced
in the great centres of
Iona, Kesh, Armagh, and
Gloucester and Mainz, St. Guil-
dard, and Bobbio. The
Caroli Magni records the ar-
tistic purveyors of wisdom, of
scholars at the court of Charle-
magne, and the books they brought
back to the shaping of the Caro-
lingian, the common ancestor of
the Gothic printing types that
were in fifteenth-century Ger-
many and the Humanistic types
developed in Italy.

In the meantime, the indigenous
culture of Ireland was being re-
corded. The oral epic
that produced such master-
pieces as the *Táin*, a cycle of heroic
deeds with Cuchulainn as its central
figure, was being written down in its
language and so preserved for
future generations. The story-
tellers, the chroniclers were recording
the course of Irish history
as the Vikings harassed the east
coast, the expeditions inland in
the monasteries. The Vikings,
before their expulsion from
Ireland in 1014, managed to shift the
centre of influence to the towns,
and they had largely created, and
the scene for the so-called Nor-
man invasion, which was caused by
the strife in Ireland, and ratified
by the *Laudabiliter* of the reign
of Pope Adrian IV, the only
pope to occupy the Papal
throne in Ireland. The story of
the course of Irish writing has
been traced in the two streams, labelled
"Irish" and "Anglo-Irish".

The consequences of this partition
of the development of
Irish and of publishing in Ireland
have been generations
of the Normans became "more
Irish than the Irish themselves" and
from time to time to be brought
back by armies shipped across the
sea, the literature they produced
was in the English tradi-
tion. The Irish or Gaelic tradition, on
the other hand, continued its devel-
opment in the old epics and the
ballads of the bardic poets. Centres
of influence on the European
scene, and developed institutions
in which Irish Catholic colleges
were founded, Salamanca, Paris,

Rome and other places after the Pro-
testant Reformation. Printing was
introduced into Dublin by order of
Queen Elizabeth I in 1550 and, about
seventeen years later, the Queen's
Printer ordered the cutting of the first
font of Irish type. As Sir James
Ware recorded in his seventeenth-
century *Annals of Ireland*:

This year [1571] the Irish characters
were first brought into this Kingdom
by Nicholas Walsh, Chancellor of Saint
Patrick's in Dublin, and John Kerne,
then Treasurer of the same; and it was
ordered that the prayers of the Church
should be printed in that language and
should be printed in the chief town
of every diocese, where they were to
be read, and a sermon preached to
the common people, which was instrumental
to convert many of the ignorant sort in
those days.

This attempt to use the press in
Ireland was the first of its kind, which
by then was religious as well as na-
tionalistic and linguistic, led to retu-
lating from the Irish in exile. During
the seventeenth century most Irish
nationalist publishing came from
European cities, and founts of Irish
types were cut at Louvain, Rome and
Paris. The English reply was the foun-
ding of Irish type commissioned from
Edward Moxon and cut in London in
1680, which was used to print Bishop
Bedell's noble translation of the Bible
into Irish. This most important event
in Irish-language publishing points to
the confusions and divisions that have

in *The Quenier* (1730): "Whether
there be any country in Christendom
more capable of improvement than
Ireland?" The Irish hope that the
Catholic monarchy would be restored
was reflected in the large number of
Jacobite pieces offered by the Dublin
publishers. Literary publishing con-
sisted mainly of books which had
first appeared from London houses.
A small proportion of books from
"Anglo-Irish" writers was issued,
however, and the old Irish literature
was still circulated in manuscript
copies.

The Dublin University Press,
established within the grounds of
Trinity College in 1737, produced a
series of classical authors excellently
edited by Dr Hawkey, presented in a
typographical style of great distinc-
tion. This concern for style was evi-
dent in the work of many Dublin
printers and in the growth of several
excellent bookbinders—a concern
also shown in periodicals such as the
Dublin Evening Post, which, in 1737,
became one of the earliest papers to
be printed in the new custom types.

After the 1800 Act of Union,
which subjected Ireland to the direct
rule of Westminster Parliament, Irish
publishing entered a period of
decline. The national cause had, how-
ever, begun to attract leaders from
the Protestant as well as the Catholic
community, and these leaders, such
as Wolfe Tone, who was executed in
1798, could state their case in
"Anglo-Irish" terms. The national
cause attracted wide attention out-
side Ireland and aroused the ardour
of such writers as Shelley, who came
to Dublin in 1812, addressed a meet-
ing organized by Daniel O'Connell
and published two pamphlets in
Dublin calling for a free Ireland.

Outside the cities, however, the
picture painted by Patrick Colum in
his poem, "A Poor Scholar of the
Turlies", was probably a true ren-
dering of the plight of a highly intel-
lectual Gaelic people still dependent
on oral transmission of much of their
traditional literature:

Down here they have hit into and song.
They talk Kepeul the whole night long.

As the century progressed, the failure
of successive attempts to have the Act
of Union repealed, either by Parli-
mentary procedure under the leader-
ship of such figures as Parnell, or by
military action, as advocated by revo-
lutionary organizations such as the
Fenian Brotherhood, led to a widen-
ing of the gap in the community. The
Anglo-Irish writers tended more and
more to seek publication from the
London houses, as Dublin, in a mat-
ter of a few decades, had lost its
status as the Empire's second city,
and could no longer offer adequate
opportunities, either social or com-
mercial.

While the eighteenth-century
Anglo-Irish writers—among them
Goldsmith, Sheridan and Swift—who
had enriched English literature were
joined in the succeeding century by
such figures as Wilde and Shaw, the
national writers, working in Irish as
well as English, were finding their way
into print. *The Nation* newspaper,
founded in 1842 as the organ of the
Young Ireland movement, dedicated
to the creation of a free Irish state,
was the beginning of a growing tide
of publishing both in English and
Irish of national and traditional ma-
terial. Learned societies, and scholars
like John O'Donovan and George
Petrie, who sponsored the cutting of
the finest type designed solely for
printing in Irish, issued fine editions
of the annals, the bardic poems and
other works of old Irish literature
which had survived in manuscript.
The poets of the national movement
such as Yeats, Mangan and Ferguson
were the spiritual ancestors of those
who, at the end of the century, were
to create the Irish Renaissance. The
imprints of Duffy and Gill, which still
figure among our publishers today,
indicate a resurgence of Irish publish-
ing that did not, however, always find
favour with a Catholic hierarchy
which, since the passing of the Act of

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